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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANJUL 000708

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DAKAR PLS PASS DAO, ODC, AND RAO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [MOPS](#) [GA](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: THE GAMBIA: SENEGALESE VISITORS, JAMMEH'S
FORTHCOMING STATEMENTS

REF: BANJUL 695

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOSEPH STAFFORD, REASON 1.4 (B AND D)

SUMMARY

1. (C) President Jammeh used high-level Senegalese visits to deny -- unconvincingly -- meddling in the Casamance and profess his commitment to good ties with Senegal. Senegalese Chief of Defense Staff spoke of plans to conclude a MOU with the Gambian military to strengthen cooperation via, inter alia, joint training programs, while the GOS Justice Minister cited the need for greater bilateral cooperation in the judicial and law enforcement areas. Senegalese Ambassador Fall gave upbeat readout on the consultations, but their actual impact on the GOTG's Casamance posture remains to be seen. END SUMMARY.

HIGH-LEVEL SENEGALESE VISITS

2. (SBU) As foretold by the Senegalese Ambassador here (reftel), GOS Chief of Defense Staff General Abdoulaye Fall visited Banjul November 15 and was followed the next day by GOS Justice Minister Sheikh Tijan Sey. Both visitors met with President Yahya Jammeh, who, in media comments afterward, sought to knock down reports of Gambian meddling in the Casamance. He denied supporting dissident Casamance rebel figure Salif Sadio, asserting "I will never support a rebel or any rebel group" and, expressing his "dissatisfaction" over the situation in the Casamance, professed his commitment to peace in that region. In a reference to claims of Gambian authorities providing refuge to rebel fighters, Jammeh gave assurances that anyone breaking the law in Senegal and fleeing to The Gambia would be apprehended here and handed over to the GOS. However, he went on to accuse the GOS of failing to reciprocate, asserting that there were instances in which "Gambian fugitives are given safehaven in Senegal." (COMMENT: Jammeh was presumably referring to such "fugitives" as the ringleader of the failed coup plot here in March, former Defense Chief Col Ndure Cham; as reported reftel, Gambian sources express conviction that Cham remains in Senegal. END COMMENT)

3. (SBU) Jammeh also spoke of his commitment to good relations overall with Senegal, saying "I will never pray evil for Senegal...The Gambia harbors no grievances against Senegal." He cited The Gambia's fishing sector as illustrative of the GOTG's good will, stating that "my government spends millions in the fishing industry and about 99 percent of those who utilize those facilities are Senegalese; if I were not interested in the development of the two countries' ties, that would not happen." Following

his meeting with Jammeh, Fall expressed hope that the two sides would soon conclude a MOU that would strengthen bilateral military links by providing, inter alia, for joint training programs. As for Sey, in an allusion to GOS concerns over Gambian authorities' sheltering of Sadio and his forces, he spoke of the need for greater bilateral cooperation in the judicial and law enforcement fields.

POSITIVE READOUT FROM SENEGALESE AMBASSADOR

14. (C) In a brief readout to Ambassador, Senegalese Ambassador Mamadou Fall said the GOS was satisfied with the results of Fall's and Sey's consultations, asserting that they had served to "clear the air" with Jammeh over the Casamance dossier. According to Fall, Jammeh "clearly understood" from the visitors the depth of GOS concern over Gambian mischief-making in the Casamance and had indicated a willingness to be more supportive of Dakar's peace efforts. However, asked about the status of coup ringleader Cham, Fall responded that the visitors had listened to Jammeh's familiar allegation of GOS harboring of Cham, but had simply denied knowledge of his whereabouts.

COMMENT

15. (C) Jammeh's denial of support for Sadio and assertion of cooperation in handing over lawbreakers sought by the GOS were unconvincing. Despite the Senegalese Ambassador's upbeat readout, it remains to be seen whether the GOTG will be more cooperative with the GOS on the Casamance in the aftermath of these high-level Senegalese visits, especially if Jammeh maintains his suspicions of GOS complicity in the

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failed coup plot and harboring of ringleader Cham. In any event, these consultations served to lay the groundwork for the expected Wade visit here for Jammeh's inauguration December 15. END COMMENT.
STAFFORD